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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 VATICAN 000193

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SUBJECT: CHINA - HOLY SEE: NO AGREEMENT ON CATHOLIC BISHOP  
ORDINATIONS

REF: A. A. HONG KONG 002696  
[1](#)B. B. VATICAN 00111  
[1](#)C. C. VATICAN 00061

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CLASSIFIED BY: L. Francis Rooney, Ambassador, Embassy Vatican.  
REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: According to Holy See MFA Country Director for China Rota-Graziosi, the Holy See and the Government of China did not reach an agreement on episcopal ordinations, nor on the normalization of relations, during their November 2007 talks in Beijing. Rota-Graziosi is pessimistic about the chances for such an agreement in the near or mid-term and suggested that any rumors about the existence of such an agreement can probably be traced to GoC disinformation. End Summary.

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No Agreement Reached on Episcopal Ordinations  
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[1](#)2. (C) Monsignor Gianfranco Rota-Graziosi told us December 17 that the Holy See and the Government of China (GoC) had not reached an agreement or even an informal understanding on the issue of episcopal ordinations during the recently held Holy See - GoC talks in Beijing. Rota-Graziosi, who accompanied Deputy Foreign Minister equivalent Monsignor Pietro Parolin to the talks at the GoC MFA, said that GoC had not changed its long-standing demand that the Holy See agree to refrain from exercising dominion over episcopal ordinations.

[1](#)3. (C) "I see no hope for a breakthrough on the issue of episcopal ordinations or on the normalization of relations between the GoC and the Holy See in the near or mid-term", said Rota-Graziosi, adding that any reports indicating otherwise are probably disinformation from the GoC designed to create goodwill for the regime in the lead-up to the 2008 Summer Olympics and to encourage the underground church to come out into the open where it can be better controlled by the Catholic Patriotic Association.

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## China Says "No" to Vietnamese Episcopal Nomination Model

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¶4. (C) Asked whether a Vietnamese-style episcopal nomination model might serve as a compromise position, Rota-Graziosi said the GoC had explicitly rejected the Vietnamese model (Note: In Vietnam, the Holy See informally proposes three bishop candidates and the Government of Vietnam approves one). The Chinese are none too happy with their Vietnamese colleagues, said Rota-Graziosi. In fact, the Holy See heard from a reliable source that Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung was chided by a senior GoC official regarding Vietnamese dealings with the Holy See on the margins of a recently held Asian Forum. The GoC official apparently suggested to Dung that Vietnam go very slowly in their relations with the Holy See.

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## China: Rigid, but Increasing Pragmatic

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¶5. (C) Discussing the tenor of the Holy See's dealings with the GoC over the last decade or so, Rota-Graziosi said that while the regime has remained consistently rigid on the issue of Holy See authority over Catholic Church matters in China, he had observed increased flexibility in the GoC's approach to certain other matters. For example, "the GoC would never have allowed us to publish the obituaries of Chinese priests and bishops, or

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the names of recently ordained bishops and priests, in the 'Osservatore Romano' (the Vatican newspaper) without risking a strong reaction. Nowadays, we can do such things without fear of retaliation. Looking back at their behavior over a decade or so, I have definitely observed a more pragmatic approach to their dealing with us," said Rota-Graziosi (Note: Monsignor Rota-Graziosi has been in his position since 1982).

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## Comment

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¶6. (C) We believe Rota-Graziosi's assertion that there is no agreement in principle or otherwise between the Holy See and the GoC on episcopal nominations or on the normalization of relations. That said, the Holy See clearly has taken steps to ensure that it does not ruffle the GoC's feathers needlessly. The "cancellation" of a reported papal meeting with the Dalai Lama in early December 2007, taken together with the Holy See's apparent muzzling of normally outspoken GOC critic Cardinal Joseph Zen, demonstrates the Holy See's desire not to give the GoC an excuse to retaliate against the Holy See or the faithful in China.

ROONEY